

11 April 1987

Level of World Arms Sales to Iran Regarded as Largely Unchanged

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 10 — Contrary to expectations, the disclosures of Washington's secret arms sales to Iran do not appear to have increased Tehran's ability to obtain military equipment from Western and Communist countries, according to American officials.

But at the same time, intelligence analysts say, the State Department's efforts to dissuade other countries from permitting weapons deliveries have not curbed the flow of arms significantly.

"I'm really more struck by what hasn't changed," said an Administration official who monitors intelligence reports on the situation. "There was a lull after the revelations for about a month, and then things went back to normal."

Since the American arms sales came to light in November, the State Department has lodged nine diplomatic complaints with foreign governments about sales to Iran, most of them in the last few weeks, officials said. The form of the complaints, known technically as a *démarche*, was less severe than a formal protest.

This week, Portugal was asked to stop shipments of 155-millimeter artillery ammunition to Iran, and South Korea was urged to halt sales of four-wheel-drive vehicles.

It was the second appeal to South Korea, according to State Department officials. Earlier, a cargo of ammunition from South Korea was recalled before it reached Iran.

The other recent complaints were made to Israel, which was asked to dissuade an Israeli arms dealer from shipping unspecified weapons from a third country; Brazil, which was approached over a Brazilian company's arms deal; the Netherlands, approached over plans to export Fokker aircraft to Iran, and Austria, approached over artillery ammunition. China received complaints from Secretary of State George P. Shultz during his visit to Beijing last month and more recently from Michael H. Armacost, Under Secretary for Political Affairs.

But officials in Washington acknowledged that the effort was being hurt by several factors, including Iran's increasing use of middlemen to buy small lots of items that are hard to trace.

Intelligence information, as sketchy as some experts say it is, shows the weapons trade to be diverse and durable, not very susceptible to shifting policies in Washington.

The Administration has compiled a list of 41 nations, excluding the United States, from which Iran has been able to buy military equipment since the beginning of its war with Iraq in 1980.

The list includes practically all the significant arms manufacturers in the world, most of which have sold relatively small amounts of ammunition, small arms and spare parts for the mainly low-technology, infantry-oriented war, officials say.

Unlike the major weapons systems that have been provided mostly by China and North Korea, these small-scale items are difficult to track with the customary intelligence-gathering techniques of satellite photography and interceptions of telephone and electronic communications.

To spot these smaller items, a former intelligence official said, "you have to have people on the ground constantly validating your estimates to see if weapons have changed in performance; you have to analyze shell fragments, look at emissions from radar, radio or guidance systems, which can be tracked only for brief moments if you're in the line of sight."

He added that Iraq, which has provided some of its intelligence information to the United States to help identify Iran's weapons suppliers, had not permitted direct American inspection of shell fragments or other items, recovered from the battlefield, that could bear serial numbers or other markings. And the Administration has apparently not pressed for such access.

When the secret American arms deliveries to Iran became known, diplomats and academic experts speculated that the news would encourage a rush by other countries to make sales and would undermine Washington's effort to discourage them. Although a few analysts believe it is too early to tell if a surge of deliveries will materialize, most see evidence of little change.

"I've tried to be realistic," said Edward J. Derwinski, who supervises the effort to discourage sales as Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance, Science and Technology. "When I've called in ambassadors to discuss problems with them, I preface it by saying, 'Look, regardless of what you've heard and read, we are serious, we do mean business.' If anything, there's a sort of sympathy. They say, 'We realize this whole thing is more difficult, but we wish you well in the effort.'"

Chinese a Major Supplier

Washington has practically no leverage over Communist countries, however. The Chinese have become a major supplier of weapons systems, analysts say, both for the money and for strategic reasons.

Despite plummeting oil revenues, "Iran will cheerfully pay two or three times the going price," a Government analyst said. And China sees Iran as a counter to Soviet influence and wants increased Iranian support of the rebels fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

A private analyst, Anthony H. Cordesman, estimates that China has sold \$2.4 billion worth of weapons to Iran since the war began. Together, China and North Korea are believed to have provided about half the dollar value of Iran's arms purchases in 1986.

China has reportedly sold Iran its version of the Soviet Styx or Silkworm missile, which can hit oil tankers in the narrow Strait of Hormuz.

In addition, intelligence analysts say, Iran has begun receiving Chinese-built surface-to-surface missiles similar to the Soviet Scud, with range for attacks on Baghdad, the Iraqi capital. The missiles, they say, may be coming from either North Korea or China.

List of 41 Nations With Iran Sales

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 11 — Following are countries, other than the United States, in which weapons deals were made with Iran or from which arms were shipped to Iran at any time from 1980 to 1986, according to the Reagan Administration. Officials said that in some cases only one sale was made several years ago and that the governments might have been neither involved nor aware of the deal. Countries marked with an asterisk are believed to have made sales in 1986, the Administration said.

Argentina	Greece	Portugal
Austria	Hungary*	Rumania
Belgium	India	Singapore*
Brazil	Indonesia	South Korea*
Britain	Israel	Soviet Union*
Bulgaria*	Italy	Spain*
Canada	Japan*	Sweden
Chile	Kenya	Switzerland*
China*	Libya	Syria
Czechoslovakia*	Netherlands*	Taiwan*
Denmark*	North Korea*	Turkey
East Germany	Norway	Vietnam
Ethiopia	Pakistan	West Germany*
France	Poland	

STAT